



# the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

## SCBWI DAVIS, SPRING SPIRIT IV, APRIL 4, 2008

By Erin Dealey

SCBWI Davis Conference Spring Spirit IV began with an inspiring keynote by Newbery Honor author Kirby Larson, who compared "Hattie Big Sky's" first 15 drafts to her own beloved grandmother's sewing lessons--"Rip out a seam. Do it right." Larson, who took ten years to write "Hattie Big Sky," reminded participants that, "No writing is ever wasted," and encouraged all to, "Write through the bad stuff."



Conference attendees check in at the day's start.

Random House Editorial Director Heidi Kilgras followed with a lively reality check for writers submitting in this era of rising publishing costs: Editors must sell your manuscript to

so many adults before it reaches the children you wrote it for--design, publicity, marketing, sales, distributors, book stores. Kilgras added, "And you wonder why editors are so picky?" Twelve questions she asks herself about picture book submissions include target audience, illustration possibilities, strong title, appeal, consistent voice, story arc, and a "boppo" ending that makes kids beg, "Again?"

Kilgras likes "funny, perky BREVITY," but above all, "wants to be passionate about your manuscript." Please note that, with the exception of the lucky participants who won the



A little coffee, some treats, good conversation and a conference too.

Submit-to-Random-House drawing, Kilgras does not accept unsolicited, unagented submissions.

Pamela Bobowicz, Assistant Editor at Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House, said unagented writers can get their manuscript read by entering the Delacorte Dell Yearling Contest for a first Middle Grade Novel. She prefers humorous family or historical middle grades and YAs that are not edgy and echoed colleague Kilgras' point that,

"Publishing is a business. Consider the marketplace...Search for the right home for your book...Read what you like, what is recommended, what is hot." Free e-newsletters like Publisher's Lunch (publishersmarketplace@yahoo.com), PW's Children's Bookshelf (www.publishersweekly.com) , and YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) www.ala.org/yalsa are great resources as well.

Editor-at-Large and Founding Children's Publisher at Chronicle, Victoria Rock, also stressed market research. "Be sure your manuscript fits our list. What distinguishes your book from others that are out there?" Rock is currently editing three middle grades novels, a new genre for her. Rock believes vision and voice are the keys to making an old idea fresh. "Tell the story only



Judy Enderle & Stephanie Gordon encourage conference attendees

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# SPRING SPIRIT 4

you can, in the way only you can tell it."

Voice was a key point in the dozen editing tips to strengthen a manuscript, provided by the Writer's Ink team of Stephanie Gordon and Judy Enderle. Their twelve no-nonsense tips covered the basics of proper manuscript format as well as tips on improving consistency in your characters' actions.

In addition, two SCBWI authors presented excerpts from their school visits.

Award-winning biographer Jeri Chase Ferris uses props to grab the attention of the audience and keep it. Her school visits highlight her books about people who have made a difference in the world. Ferris believes it is important to tailor each presentation to the individual school.

Liz Hockinson, author of the delightful picture book, "Marcello,



Kirby Larson reflects on the past

the Movie Mouse," uses a Power Point presentation to help focus the audience's attention. A lively addition to a school visit is to summarize your book into a Reader's Theater format and invite volunteers from the audience to



Pamela Bobowics sits down for a chat

act it out.

Both first-time participants and seasoned SCBWI members agreed the conference gave them what they need to take their writing to the next level. As the morning's keynote speaker, Kirby Larson quoted from one of her favorite books, Russell Hoban's "The Mouse and His Child": "You've got to take those daring leaps or you're nowhere!" 🐭

**Erin Dealey, Author**  
**"Goldie Locks Has Chicken Pox"**  
**Atheneum 2002, Aladdin**  
**Paperbacks 2005**  
**"Little Bo Peep Can't Get to Sleep"**  
**Atheneum, 2005**  
**"Talk About a Great Invention!"**  
**Pearson 2007**  
[www.erindealey.com](http://www.erindealey.com)



Linda Boydon looks through members' published work

Photo Credit for this page and page one: Pam Wilkinson

## Spring Spirit IV Conference: Priscilla Burris

By Linda Boyden



Illustrators show their off sketchbooks during Priscilla's workshop

Author, illustrator, member of the SCBWI Board of Advisors and National Illustrator Coordinator, Priscilla Burris grew up across the street from a public library which she considered to be another kind of playground, infusing her childhood with the flavor and love of books. As a young woman she attended a fashion design institute, but was criticized for giving her sketches too much facial expression, something unnecessary in fashion design.

However as Mrs. Burris said, "Nothing is a waste of time." Eventually she found her niche in illustrating picture books where her skill and love of facial expressions plus elements of art she gleaned from design school

coalesced into the array of her trademark beautifully illustrated books: *La Cancion de Gabriela* (Harpercollins/RAYO), *I Love You All Day Long* (Harpercollins), *Daddy All Day Long* (Harpercollins) and *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* (Cartwheel/Scholastic), among others.

Mrs. Burris believes illustrators need to prepare for success by perseverance and practice. She encouraged all of us in the workshop to find our niches, develop our own styles and refine them. She cautioned us not to worry about trends, but to stay true to our own styles of art. She also believes that anyone who



An example of work created for Priscilla's "Mary Had A Little Lamb" Project

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# Burris

works in children's literature should read, read, read in their preferred genre.

Successful illustrators must realize that producing a picture book is a genuine team effort. It requires talent from many arenas, and sometimes an enormous amount of patience. Art directors and editors are overwhelmed with work. Illustrators should keep that in mind when a project lags. We should strive to be a team player whenever possible. She suggested that the job is about "R&R": building relationships and reputations.

As a newcomer to the field of picture book illustrating, Mrs. Burris' workshop provided me with many supportive and instructive ideas. Her winning smile, genuine love of the art of illustrating and astute insights made me feel as if I were on the right path. ☺

**Linda Boyden, author, storyteller, illustrator & poet**  
Member: **Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers & SCBWI**  
For young readers:  
**Picture books:** "The Blue Roses" from **Lee & Low Books 2002**, winner of the first **New Voices Award, 2000**, **Paterson Prize, 2003** and **Wordcraft Circle's Book of the Year, 2003**  
**Her first illustrated book:** "Powwow's Coming" from the **University of New Mexico Press, 2007**  
**Also for young listeners:** "Grammy Linda & Her Magic Window" preschool storytelling **DVD, 2006**  
"Stories of the Grandmothers" **Native American storytelling CD, 2006**  
For older readers: **poetry books, "WomanSong" & "Cemetery Plots"**  
Visit [www.lindaboyden.com](http://www.lindaboyden.com)

# Good News:

**By Genny Heikka**

## ARA SCBWI North Central California

**Annie Bowler's** book, "Adventures of the Treasure Fleet, China Discovers the World," will be reprinted in Chinese. It will be available in 2009. In addition, Tuttle Publishing will release her book tentatively titled, "Korean Culture for Kids, Hands-On Activities" in 2009.

**Kirby Larson** and **Mary Nethery** have co-authored a picture book, "Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship and Survival," which will come out this August from Walker Books. It is also a Junior Library Guild selection.

**Lea Lyon's** book, "Keep Your Ear on the Ball," written by Genevieve Petrillo came out last fall and was a finalist for the Schneider Family ALA award is currently on display at the MOCHA exhibit, Once Upon A Time, Then and Now. The Then and Now exhibit displays not only original art from the book, but also a painting or drawing the artist did as a child, which is inspiring for young artists. Her upcoming book, a "Hanukkah Story, The Miracle Jar" written by Audrey Penn (author of "The Kissing Hand") will come out in the fall. Lea is also busy planning the second annual Illustrator Day at Fort Mason for next September.

**Kris MCleod** has written a picture book called "Hush-a-Bye Counting," which will be coming out in fall, '08. In November '07 she sold an activity and a two page spread illustration for Ladybug Magazine, plus she was asked to illustrate the issue's cover. In August '07 she had a haiku and illustration in Spider Magazine.

**Nancy O'Connell's** book, "Looking For Maji" is scheduled to be out in fall '08. It is set in Africa and will be published by Peachtree Publishers.

**Michael Elsohn Ross'** newest book "Mama's Milk" illustrated by Ashley Wolff was recently included on the 2008 CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center) list of best books. It has also just been released as in a bilingual Spanish/English version in hardcover and paper back.

**Danna Smith** sold a picture book, "Two at the Zoo," to Clarion due out winter 2009. She also sold a story titled "Majestic Flying" to Spider magazine which will be in the October 2008 issue.

**Cheryl Spanos'** middle-grade fantasy "Tougher than Dragon Hide" won "Runner-Up" for Children's Fiction in the 2008 San Francisco Writers Conference Writing Contest.

**Karen Stanton's** book, "Papi's Gift" (Boyd's Mills Press April 2007), was listed by the International Readers Association as a 2008 Notable Book for a Global Society. The book was also chosen for Special Recognition by the judges of the 2008 Paterson Prize for Books for Young People. In addition, she's sold her third book currently titled "Mondays, Wednesdays and Every Other Weekend" to Nancy Paulsen at Putnam for a spring 2010 release. Karen will be author and illustrator.

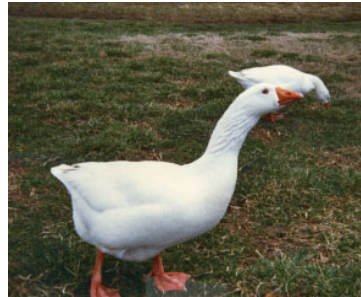
**Deborah Underwood** just accepted an offer from Houghton Mifflin on a picture book.

**Linda Boyden** has art from her '07 picture book, "Powwow's Coming," from the University of New Mexico Press in the MOCHA Then and Now exhibit. The exhibit runs from April 4-May 31. ☺

Jeff's pet, Monty



Linda's pet, Bruce



Genny's pet, Spot



# Regional Advisor's Corner

From Tekla White

SCBWI Regional Advisor North Central California

It was exciting to see all of the writers and illustrators who came to the spring conference on April 5th. I wish I had had time to visit with all of you. Please keep in touch between conferences and send me news, as well as information about important happenings in your lives.

I want to thank all the wonderful volunteers who worked before and during the conference. Sherry Smith, Patricia Newman, Suzy Hopkins, Nikki Smith, Betty Provost, Erin Dealey, Nadine Pinkerton, Pam Wilkinson, Rob Hugger, Erikka Hugger, Kris McLeod, Linda Boyden, and Joy Allen were amazing!

Now that the spring conference is over, I hope to recruit more volunteers for the North/Central SCBWI region. You could, for example, send a writing or an illustrating tip to your regional advisor for this column. I haven't heard from you, and I'd love to add your ideas to the column.

Let me know what programs and meetings you are interested in attending, too.

If you would like to have meetings or get-togethers in your area, I'm always interested in new ideas. Inexpensive meeting places, local speakers, and volunteers would be needed. Perhaps your critique group can put together a critique session for others in your area, or work together to set up a meeting. All SCBWI events have to be approved by the regional advisor, and I'll be glad to talk about your plans.

We need a large number of volunteers to send postcards to schools advertising the speakers' bureau on our website. The postage and the cards are provided by our region. Contact Tekla [tnwrites@cal.net](mailto:tnwrites@cal.net) to help with the mailing in May and September.

Tip from your regional advisor: Keep a daily journal about your writing or illustrating projects. Jot down questions and thoughts about characters or nonfiction subjects and record the answers on another day. Include ideas for future projects, the authors and titles of interesting books, as well as notes about the craft of writing and illustrating that you'd like to use and remember. Describe a spectacular sunset or scene you could include in your work. At the end of the year, you will enjoy reading about your creative process and have an invaluable record about your ideas and your work.

Have a happy, productive summer,  
Tekla White,  
North/Central California SCBWI Regional Advisor.

## ACORN SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The Acorn is a triyearly publication. Issues will be posted on the SCBWI NorCa website <http://www.scbwinorca.org/news/newletterlhtm>

hopefully around the middle of January, May, and September of each year. The deadline for submissions is one month prior to each publication date.

Please contact Linda Boyden about submission due dates or for more information.



Tekla's pet, Bella



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